

February 16, 2017

To: Steve Sadowsky, Historical Preservation Officer  
Michael Embesi, Urban Forest Division Manager  
Keith Mars, City Arborist and Urban Forest Conservation Program Manager

RE: Concerned Residents Regarding a Demolition Application at 3901 Brookview Road in the Schieffer Willowbrook Neighborhood (Permit/Case Number 2017-006009 PR)

Dear Mr. Sadowsky, Mr. Embesi, and Mr. Mars:

On January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, BDB Ventures LLC (BDB) filed a request with the City of Austin for total demolition of the existing single family residence at 3901 Brookview Road, located at Schieffer Place Section 5 Lot 7, Block B. The surrounding neighbors are strongly opposed to demolition of the home, which was built in 1961 and the former homestead of the Schieffer family.

Mr. Emmett Richard Schieffer was a prominent East Austin landholder and community advocate, who is best known as being the donor of the land where Maplewood Elementary now stands. The neighborhood is currently considering requesting historical designation for the Schieffer-Willowbrook neighborhood as a result of the Schieffer family's community contributions as well as unique architectural features of the homes in our neighborhood. Literature states that Mr. Schieffer had a dairy at Vineland and Brookview Road. A brief history of Schieffer-Willowbrook neighborhood and 3901 Brookview Road is provided in the Attachment to this letter. The 3901 Brookview Road homestead remained in the Schieffer family lineage until it was sold to BDB in 2016.

We are contacting you to request your support in preventing demolition of 3901 Brookview.

3901 Brookview Road is a flagship lot at the central core of our neighborhood and carries a strong historical significance to nearby residents. We have been in contact with the City of Austin regarding the developer's plans to demolish and redevelop 3901 Brookview. The Schieffer/ Willowbrook Neighborhood Association opposes the demolition of the home at 3901 Brookview Road.

The property includes six heritage oaks, five of which are registered trees (#4330, #4331, #4332, #4333, and #4335). The measured circumference of the trees ranges from 84 inches to 173 inches. We are very concerned about removal of any of the large heritage trees on this lot or any disturbance of the root zone which may be caused by demolition or redevelopment.

We would like your support for our neighborhood and your assistance in denying BDB Ventures LLC Demolition Permit Application (2017-006009 PR). We desire to see that any new renovation and/or development of this property reflect compatibility with the surrounding houses in our neighborhood.

Sincerely,



David Boston, 4404 Vineland, Austin, TX 78722  
Chair, Schieffer-Willowbrook Neighborhood Association

**ATTACHMENT**

## **A Brief History of Schieffer-Willowbrook neighborhood and 3901 Brookview Road, Austin, Texas**

**by Margaret Mills,  
August 25, 2016**

The first known private landowner of this property northeast of central Austin was Thomas Hawkins of Kentucky, who purchased 510 acres from the State of Texas on April 22, 1841. He may have been a land speculator who let it go for non-payment of taxes when values did not appreciate quickly, for he did not sell it himself. 165 acres of the property (now the Schieffer-Willowbrook neighborhood) was sold at auction in 1850 to County Clerk Ashford B. McGill for \$0.52 in back taxes plus a \$1 title fee. McGill sold off portions of the property over the next 12 years.

McGill sold a 71-acre parcel to Christopher Columbus Browning for \$426 in 1854. Browning then purchased an adjacent 72 acres (sold earlier by McGill) during the Civil War for \$216, and in 1870, another 10 acres from the Estate of Supreme Court Justice George Moore for \$100. That reassembled nearly the entire acreage the County Clerk had purchased at auction 20 years earlier.

Browning was a lieutenant in the Texas Rangers, and a renowned "Indian fighter" during early settlement days. He died at home in 1870, where his wife Penina died in 1882. Their home at first had been a log cabin, later a frame home, built near what is now the intersection of Schieffer and Brookview.

During the 1870s and 1880s the widow Mrs. Browning sold various parcels including: 110 acres to Joseph Cummings and wife Texas; and 43 acres to Ben Radkey. Radkey had a hardware store on Pecan Street and was a partner in Austin's first foundry. Both and he and Cummings farmed the land (mostly in cotton, corn and pasture) but did not live there.

Richard Schieffer, a son of Prussian immigrants, purchased 96 acres from Radkey's widow Mary in 1887. He built a dairy at what is now Brookview and Vineland, with the property as grazing land. He also owned a meat market with his brother Hermann Schieffer. His son Emmett Richard Schieffer (1883-1959) lived in the Schieffer homestead at 3901 Brookview until his death. The dairy farm remained in the Schieffer family for more than 50 years.

Through the 1920s and 1930s, the property remained mostly wooded pasture land with Holstein dairy cattle. There was a slaughterhouse about midway down what is now Willowbrook Reach greenbelt, possibly a source of meat for the Schieffer family meat market. A cattle barn was where East 40<sup>th</sup> Street meets Boggy Creek.

The frame farmhouse homestead and outbuildings sat on a hill overlooking the dairy. It burned and was replaced by the brick ranch house in the heritage oak grove on the hill at Brookview and Vineland (3901 Brookview). Emmitt Scheiffer, the last member of the Schieffer family on the property, was living there at the time of his death.

After World War II, Emmett had sold off lots for homes in what is now the Schieffer-Willowbrook neighborhood. As Austin grew after that, the family also transferred or sold portions of their properties for Maplewood Elementary School, "Duplex Nation" (a post-WWII duplex subdivision now listed in the National Register of Historic Places), and the Delwood shopping center, the first of its kind in the nation.

Following Emmett Schieffer's death, Harvey Morris Stevens who was married to Gwendolyn Eliza Schieffer purchased the home. He died in 1998, and the house was sold in 1999 to Nancy Hrin, their daughter, who then transferred ownership to a Brookview Road LLC trust in 2000. 3901 Brookview stayed within the Schieffer lineage until it was sold to BDB LLC developer in July 2016, who has plans to subdivide the 0.63-acre lot into 3 parcels, with a house on each one.

This Schieffer family has a long history in Austin. Prussian immigrants Ferdinand Schieffer (1828-1889), a carpenter, and Sophia Koch (1830-1889) arrived in the US in 1849 and the couple settled first in Seguin, then Austin. They had 11 children, all born in Texas. Two of their children were proprietors of their own butcher shop and meat market in Austin. They were brothers Hermann (1868-1946) and Richard Schieffer (1855-1898). The Hermann Schieffer Meat Market was first located at 2502 Guadalupe, then in the 1100 block of Lydia in Austin.

Richard Schieffer purchased the rural acreage, started the dairy farm and built the farm home. He and his wife Augusta Thiele (1856-1947) had 6 children, and their son Emmett Richard Schieffer continued the dairy farm until he began selling off lots for homes during the post-World War II building boom. Even though Emmett later rose to various executive positions at Scarbrough's Department Store during his career, on his death certificate his son Richard listed Emmett Schieffer's occupation as a "retired dairyman."